

Family Admissions, Student, and Employee Standards: Sexuality Questions and Answers

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The following seeks to answer frequently asked questions regarding the ACCS's standards set out in its member handbook. Although we have sought to ensure that the answers below are consistent with, and build on, the handbook, and believe that they are, should there be any inconsistency, the handbook controls.

1. Our school is an evangelical or "open enrollment" school. We admit families who agree to allow us to "teach their children according to Christian standards." But, they need not be Christian. Does this policy apply to our non-Christian families?

A—Yes. Most non-Christians do not live as advocates for their unbelief. For example, an atheist does not generally live in visible rebellion against Christianity. If one repeatedly did this in a Christian school community, we would expect administration to take action. An unbelieving or believing family in a homosexual relationship is openly advocating a form of rebellion against scripture and Christ. Doing so in your school community will subvert it, creating pressure and conflict in teaching truth in the classroom and among school community relationships.

2. Is the ACCS requiring that members only serve Christian families?

A— No. We are trying to safeguard member schools' identity as Christian communities, which affirm and seek to live out biblical truth.

3. We already have some LGBTQ families. Do we need to expel them?

A— Not at this time. This policy forbids enrolling new families with sexual identities that do not conform to Christian standards. Schools should, however, pay attention to the effects on their community of such families' being present, and may wish to reassess their situation between academic years.

4. Why do we single out LGBTQ relationships? What about divorce, fornication, or other sins? Aren't we all sinners?

A—We have focused on actions that publicly and visibly subvert our schools' efforts to live out biblical truth within the school community. Such actions invariably set or affect the norms in a community, leading to what is perceived as acceptable and even noble within it.

Imagine you attend a school basketball game. In the stands, a divorce or adultery, or gossip will not be visibly obvious as "OK." But, two men cheering on their "son" is an endorsement of same sex marriage. Some argue that divorce is the same thing as same sex marriage— sin. There is a community eroding difference that is directly addressed in 1 Corinthians 5: One is sin that is not publicly visible. The other is public advocacy of the sin.

In 1 Corinthians 5, we see a clear alignment. Paul tells Christian communities not to embrace visible sexual sin widely observed within the community—In the scriptural case, a man is in an open and visible relationship with his father's wife. Rather than mourning the situation and putting the man out of the community, the community takes pride in this arrangement. Why is this situation a problem? "Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?" Paul is concerned that the Christian community will accept the sinful behavior as normative, and it will corrupt the community.

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5. What if there are extenuating circumstances? Can there be exceptions?

A—Yes. Schools can make exceptions as long as they are aligned with the principles of this policy. For example, one common situation is that a matriculating, traditional family divorces and one of the parents enters a same-sex relationship. The remaining parent is a faithful Christian. The family has been at the school, and forcing them to leave would not be in the best interest of the faithful spouse or the children. Most of the community would understand the situation and not take it as endorsing an invalid Christian lifestyle. We suggest schools in this situation establish boundaries for the homosexual parent, such as limiting his or her new "spouse" or partner from coming on campus, as this will create confusion and contention.

We suggest that schools make exceptions to their policy when the principle of Christian community is not violated. For example, the community will likely know of the above situation. Schools may make exceptions as long as the principle is upheld: No families are living endorsements of same-sex unions, sex "changes" or other sexual identities.

6. Why are single-parent households or divorced families not included in this policy? What about unmarried male/female couples?

A— Single parent or divorced families can be biblical, and the situations are not widely observable. Since outside observers do not know the situations, they will not see an endorsement of the lifestyle. While unmarried couples are unbiblical, they are also not an observable lifestyle—unless the couple makes this fact a public point. These situations fall under the 1 Cor. 5 leavening issue-- do they leaven the lump? Generally, this answer is no (in a particular situation it might be yes). Schools are welcome to develop more strict policies on their own. Our interest with this policy is to protect the broader Christian community of our schools, and our national Christian community.

7. Does the ACCS require schools to expel students who claim an unbiblical sexual identity?

A— In cases where a student identifies extra-biblically, the school has disciplinary discretion. This policy does not require expulsion. If the student's parents affirm this unbiblical identity in a way that impacts the school's community, and a course of corrective discipline has been taken by the school, the ACCS would require that the family be removed from the school. The principle should be that of 1 Corinthians 5: Is this activity "leavening" the school's community?

8. Does this policy require us to poll our families, or otherwise assess what they believe?

A— No. This policy focuses on the admission of families that, by words or conduct within the school community, publicly reject the truth of the biblical model of the family. This includes admission of families which have either parents or children that openly express an LGBT identity. For parents, this means they are in a homosexual marriage or are living in an LGBTQ relationship. For students, this means they openly identify as LGBTQ. Of course, in the case of students, a course of discipline should be followed. Immediate expulsion is not expected by this policy.

We do not advise that schools announce this policy to the school's families, though this is certainly permissible.

9. Does this policy address families that go public with their LGBTQ support?

A— No. This policy does not address what parents may think or may say outside the school community. Schools are asked to consider with wisdom matters that impact their community and encouraged to safeguard their communities from those who would do damage.



10. Does this policy prohibit the admission of celibate homosexuals?

A— No. This policy centers on what is openly visible to observers within the school community. We presume "celibate homosexuals" does not include those who are "married" as this would be a visible conflict. Schools may wish to have more restrictive policies than we require, however.

11. What about admission of a student with divorced parents, one of whom is homosexual?

A- This will depend on the particular circumstances. In principle, if the homosexual parent is involved enough to be present in the community, they must be required not to bring their partner to events, etc. Again, the principle is that visible acceptance of the lifestyle will "leaven the lump" and implicitly pressure the school community toward non-Christian views of sexuality.

12. How are LGBTQ families different than other non-Christian families—like Muslims?

A— For those schools that accept unbelievers, non-Christians may enroll. But, they do so understanding that they are guests, expected and agreeing to live consistent with the host's norms. While a Muslim woman may wear a head covering, this is not unbiblical. The same can be said of nearly any other religion's ways of life. No one is likely to be confused as to whether a Muslim family at a school is advocating for heterodoxy within the Christian community —of course they're Muslims, who do not represent Christians.

However, if a Muslim family with a husband and 3 wives attempted to enroll, that family would fall under this policy, and they should not be admitted (polyamory or polygamy is also covered by the policy). Families claiming identities and relationships other than one-man and one-woman in a marriage are in direct violation of scripture and this policy, and their practice will place the entire community in a position of conflict.

If this distinction is difficult, imagine explaining it to your 3rd grader. "Oh, those are Muslims. They don't believe in Jesus as God, but they are willing to come to our school and live as part of our community. Maybe they will become Christians." vs. "Oh, Heather's two mommies claim to be Christians, but…" (Or, "Heather has two mommies, and that family is welcome here, but that's not what our school affirms and how we we seek to live.") How can you explain it? Any way a school tries to integrate LGBTQ acceptance into its community, it will create confusion or apostasy visible to the community of students, teachers, or visitors.

13. As a school, we have authority over students while they're at school. Aren't parents outside of our authority?

A—Yes and no. Because parents are not under the direct authority of the school, it is imperative that admissions policies screen families up front, before they are part of the school community, as indicated in this policy.

Some believe that a school consists of teachers and students, and that families are outside of its purview. This belief omits an all-important 3rd leg on the "Paideia stool", and the source of our authority to educate: The family. Schools operate In Loco Parentis—as an agent of the family. How can we be faithful servants to parents who are openly hostile to the truth of Christ? There are countless things we would not allow parents to do within a school. These all fall under the banner of "community standards." This policy is in the spirit of a community standard.

14. Does this ACCS Policy require that member schools create a policy on this matter?

A— No. Our policy only relates to the practices of a school. Formal policies of the school are not in view. In other words, we do not require that a school have a policy on admissions that says anything in particular. Rather, we require that member schools practice in alignment with our policy.



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15. We are concerned that changing our practices or policy to conform to the ACCS policy may put us at legal risk. Are resources available to help?

A— We strongly recommend that ACCS Member schools enroll in the Alliance Defending Freedom's membership program for schools. We have secured a 20% discount for ACCS member schools. Search "ADF" on the ACCS MRC for more information. Under this program, the ADF will review policies that address this matter. The ACCS policies that regard this membership requirement have undergone legal review.



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Addendum: For reference only,

The ACCS Membership Handbook section pertaining to this Q&A.

A Classical Christian school is a Christian community, one that encompasses students and their immediate families as integral parts. To establish and maintain that nature, a school will affirm and seek to live out the biblical model of the family, according to which marriage is a life-long covenant between one man and one woman and is the only proper basis for sexual activity. The community cannot do this when individuals within it publicly reject the truth of the biblical model, whether by speech or by participating in alternative family structures that publicly and visibly contradict the biblical model (e.g. polyamorous and homosexual unions). Likewise, a Christian school community will affirm and seek to live out the biblical truth that each person's biological sex is an immutable gift from God, to be embraced.

Accordingly, we expect member schools to adopt and follow the following practices.

- Member schools may not explicitly endorse unbiblical family structures or gender identities that are at odds with biological sex.
- Member schools may not employ individuals who openly participate in unbiblical family structures, adopt a gender identity at odds with their biological sex, or otherwise reject the biblical view of the family and sexual identity.
- Member schools may not enroll students who, within the school community, openly reject, by speech or conduct, the biblical view of the family and sexual identity or have themselves adopted a gender identity at odds with their biological sex. Likewise, member schools may not enroll students from households whose structure publicly contradicts the biblical model of the family or that, within the school community, openly reject, by speech or conduct, the biblical view of the family and sexual identity.

We expect both open enrollment schools (those for whom the family's Christian faith is not a requirement for admission) and schools that accept only children of believers to adopt and follow these policies. Open enrollment schools, of course, do not expect students' families to abide by every principle of Christian living. But they still must be able to create a community that lives consistently with Christian values, as part of providing a comprehensively Christian education as described above. The presence of individuals who publicly and visibly reject, whether by speech or conduct, Christian teaching on the family and sexual identity subverts a school's ability to be and provide such a community. We ask that member schools consider the implications of open enrollment. The decision may have legal ramifications in the future.